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Agenda item 8

DRAFT REPORT

Rapporteur: Mrs. Sharon BRENNEN-HAYLOCK (Bahamas)

Addendum

PROGRAMME QUESTIONS: EVALUATION (Item 4 (b))

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the in-depth evaluation of the statistics programme

1. At its 2nd and 3rd meetings, on 9 and 10 June 1997, the Committee considered the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the in-depth evaluation of the statistics programme transmitted to it under cover of a note by the Secretary-General stating his concurrence with the recommendations contained in the report (E/AC.51/1997/2).

Discussion

2. Most delegations stated that they found the recommendations acceptable and agreed with the focus of the evaluation on ascertaining users' needs and providing services to them. Several delegations noted the resource implications of the findings in the report that the programme's activities and resources are too heavily concentrated on the production of publications (para. 83) and that the development of the United Nations Economic and Social Information System (UNESIS) required reconfiguration of the work flow, new staff with different skills, the acquisition of technology and retraining of staff (para. 43). Most delegations supported the rationalization of statistical publications. The rationalization should be carried out on a gradual basis, taking duly into consideration the needs and realities of developing countries, which would

continue to benefit from the distribution of free print publications until they had full access to new technologies. Several delegations cautioned that commercial viability might not coincide with the importance of a publication to Member States, especially methodological and technical publications. Several delegations noted the uneven distribution of technological capacity among Member States. Some delegations urged that the programme's strengths and contributions should be given emphasis during the United Nations reform process and the restructuring of the Secretariat in the economic and social sectors.

Conclusions and recommendations

3. The Committee commended the report for its thorough review of the programme and agreed with its characterization of the statistics programme as an example of the type of activities that the United Nations did well, and which served important needs of States.

4. The Committee endorsed the recommendations in the report on the understanding that the Director of the Statistics Division of the Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis of the Secretariat would propose an implementation plan and timetable to the 1998 meeting of the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination of the Statistical Commission. The Committee's endorsement was on the understanding that the United Nations would continue to issue a number of publications as a matter of record and for other non-commercial reasons.

5. The Committee considered that the implementation of the strategy proposed in the report, including the development of UNESIS, would require an enhancement of skill and technology and continuing technical assistance to enhance access of developing countries to new information technologies.